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## NEWS RELEASE

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February 21, 2003

### **Cocaine, Marijuana Seized at Checkpoint**

*Nearly \$400,000 worth of narcotics in an hour*

**CHULA VISTA, Calif.** -- Over \$400,000 worth of illegal narcotics were discovered in less than an hour at the Border Patrol's checkpoint on Highway 76 yesterday afternoon.

Border Patrol Agents encountered the nervous driver of a 2000 Nissan Xterra at approximately 4:30 p.m. at the checkpoint. Inconsistent answers and nervous behavior led to a close examination of the vehicle. Agents discovered 18 bundles of marijuana inside black trash bags in the cargo area of the vehicle. All three occupants were held for investigation. The narcotics, weighing a total of more than 101 pounds, have an estimated national street value of more than \$70,000.

Ten minutes later, a Chevrolet Tahoe approached the checkpoint. The agent at the primary inspection area referred the vehicle into secondary for a closer inspection. An initial glance of the exterior of the vehicle showed indications of recent removal of the gas tank, a common indicator of concealed narcotics. An interview of the occupants raised serious questions and discrepancies. Agents transported the vehicle and occupants to the Border Patrol's I-15 checkpoint where the vehicle could be inspected closely.

When agents removed the gas tank, a sealed trap door was located. Inside a hidden compartment, agents discovered a total of 10 packages containing 26.96 pounds of cocaine with an estimated national street value of \$324,000.

The occupants of both vehicles were arrested for transportation of a controlled substance. The North County Task Force of DEA assumed the case and took custody of the suspects and vehicles.

So far this fiscal year, Border Patrol Agents in San Diego have seized cocaine and marijuana with an estimated national street value of more than \$7 million.

~ USBP ~